



CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE
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SNAPSHOT

OF CIVIL REGISTRATION AND VITAL STATISTICS SYSTEMS OF

NEPAL



Program information

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Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide a brief introduction to the civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) system in Nepal.

The information was based on a desk review of available documents on the Internet.

Among other things, the report presents:

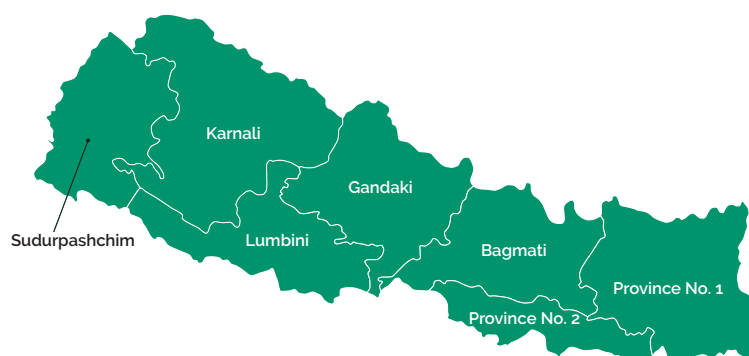
- Background information on the country;
- Selected indicators relevant for CRVS improvement processes;
- Stakeholders' activities; and
- Resources available to strengthen CRVS systems.

Brief country profile

The Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal is located in South Asia. It is landlocked, bordering China in the north and India in the south, east, and west.

Nepal is composed of seven provinces. They are defined by schedule 4 of the new constitution, by grouping together 77 existing districts. Two districts, however, are split in two parts ending up in two different provinces. At present, there are 6 metropolitan cities, 11 sub-metropolitan cities, 276 municipalities, and 460 rural municipalities.

Nepal



Disclaimer: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

- Land area: 147,516 km²
- Population: 28,608,710,¹ with an estimated annual growth rate of 1.7 percent.² In 2018, 20 percent of the population resided in urban areas,³ with the remaining 80 percent residing in rural areas.
- Capital city: Kathmandu
- Official working language: Nepali
- Ministry responsible for civil registration: Ministry of Home Affairs, Department of National ID and Civil Registration
- Civil registration agents: Rural municipal committees and municipal ward offices designated as the local registrars
- National statistical office: Central Bureau of Statistics

CRVS dimensions

Births

Completeness of birth registration	Not available
Children under 5 years of age whose births were reported as registered	56% (2016) ⁴
Births attended by skilled health personnel	58% (2017) ⁵
Women aged 15–49 who received antenatal care from a skilled provider	84% (2015) ⁶
DPT1 immunization coverage among 1-year-olds	91% (2018) ⁷
Crude birth rate (per 1,000 population)	20 (2018) ⁸
Total fertility rate (live births per woman)	1.9 (2018) ⁹
Adolescent fertility rate (per 1,000 girls aged 15–19 years)	64 (2018) ¹⁰
Population under age 15	35% (2012) ¹¹

Deaths

Completeness of death registration	Not available
Crude death rate (per 1,000 population)	6 (2018) ¹²
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	27 (2018) ¹³
Under 5 mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	32 (2018) ¹⁴
Maternal mortality rate (per 100,000 live births)	186 (2017) ¹⁵

Marriages and divorces

Marriage registration rate	78.6% (2018) ¹⁶
Women aged 20–24 first married or in union before age 15	7% (2016) ¹⁷
Women aged 20–24 first married or in union before age 18	39.5% (2016) ¹⁸
Divorce registration rate	87% (2016) ¹⁹

Vital statistics including causes of death data

Compilation and dissemination of civil registration-based statistics	Not available
Medically certified causes of death	Not available

Civil registration system

Legislative framework

In Nepal, civil registration relates to the events of birth, death, marriage, and divorce. In addition, civil registration authorities are also responsible for registration of in-country migration. The *Birth, Death and Other Personal Events (Registration) Act* was enacted in 1977 and subsequently amended in 1980, 1991, and 2006. It defined five vital events and made the registration provisions more legally binding. The Act's registration provisions in the districts came into force in a phased manner that took almost 15 years to cover the whole geographic region. Marriage registration is regulated in greater detail in the *Marriage Registration Act* from 1971, which was amended in 2018. Duties and responsibilities of registration stakeholders are further elaborated in directions to the local registrar from 2010 and in the *Local Government Operation Act, 2074* (2017).²⁰

The Department of National ID and Civil Registration (DoNIDCR), as part of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA), has prepared a draft legislative proposal to amend some procedural measures in the vital events registration regulations. Some of the major procedural measures proposed are as follows:

- Appointment of registration agents in other agencies such as embassies and missions abroad and civil registration in camps;
- Legalization of electronic records of registered vital events;
- Expansion of local registrars' responsibilities over safekeeping of vital events records; and
- Formal linking of civil registration with the management information system.

Management, organization, and operations

The registration of births, deaths, marriages, divorces, and internal migrations has been ongoing in Nepal since 1976. Since the introduction of vital event registration, people register their personal events at municipal committees and municipal ward offices, which are designated as local registrars. Government oversight of the registration process has in the meantime undergone numerous changes. More recently, the Department of Civil Registration was constituted in October 2014 and formally inaugurated in March 2015 under the Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration. The department was assigned to manage and regulate the following:

- The vital events registration system (births, deaths, marriages, divorces, and migration); and
- The operation of social transfer schemes (elderly pension, single women, disability and ethnic minority supports, and dietary benefits for children of the Karnali zone and the Dalit community, etc.) delivered through the local bodies.

The department introduced a software-based online civil registration and social protection information system called Vital Event Registration and Social Protection Management Information System (VERSP-MIS) to enhance service delivery, record management, and reporting.

The most recent institutional reforms in 2018 resulted in the transfer of the Department of Civil Registration from the Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration under the authority of the Ministry of Home Affairs and its merger with the ministry's national identity (ID) card services to form the Department of National ID and Civil Registration (DoNIDCR), which is currently in charge of both registration of vital events and identity management.

National CRVS systems coordination mechanisms

In 2014, a National CRVS Steering and Coordination Committee was established to overlook CRVS activities in the country. It is chaired by the Ministry of Home Affairs and attended by the different ministries and agencies involved, as well as representatives from administrative levels such as provinces and municipalities.

In some cases, ad hoc committees have been established to perform specific tasks, such as conducting CRVS baseline surveys. Within the framework to implement the World Bank's Strengthening Systems for Social Protection and Civil Registration Project,²¹ a comprehensive coordination mechanism has been put together to guide and oversee the project implementation. The project is designed to help develop the national population registry, strengthen the civil registration system, and modernize the payment system.

The project coordination mechanism consists of two committees.

The project steering committee is chaired by the MoHA secretary and it includes:

- Joint secretaries from MoHA; Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration; Ministry of Finance; Ministry of Health and Population; Ministry of Education, Science and Technology; Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizen; and the National Planning Commission;
- the Executive Director of Nepal Rastra Bank; and
- the Director General of DoNIDCR.

The project technical committee is chaired by the Director General of DoNIDCR and it includes:

- Under-secretaries from the Citizenship and National ID Management Section of MoHA; Development Support Coordination Section from the Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration; Ministry of Health and Population; Ministry of Education, Science and Technology; and Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizen;
- The Director of Nepal Rastra Bank;
- The Director of the Central Bureau of Statistics; and
- The Director of Civil Registration Management Section of DoNIDCR.

Administrative-level registration centres

Currently the number of local registrars is 6,239. Of these, 3,157 are located in village development committees and 3,082 are located in wards (the smallest local administrative units within municipalities), in a total of 217 municipalities. The local registrars are authorized to register and issue the certificates and perform registration-related tasks like amendments and issuance of certificate copies. They also have the authority to perform punitive actions for registration-related delays and frauds.

Each district has a District Administration Office and a District Court where all divorces and court marriages are administered.

Accessibility of civil registration services

No information available

Registration of vital events

Birth registration is compulsory and has to be performed within 35 days after delivery. Birth registration has to take place in the father's ward. If the birth registration is done in the mother's ward, the father has to submit a migration letter stating that he has migrated to the mother's ward; hence the ward becomes the father's ward as well. Birth registration is performed by a handwritten completion of a birth registration form at the local ward office. The form is signed by the parents, and their right thumb prints are put on the registration form. The person registering the birth has to present copies of both the father's and mother's citizenship certificates or their national ID card and a copy of the couple's marriage certificate. In the case of someone other than the mother or father, the application for birth registration can be requested by the main person of the family, and in his absence, the family Old Man (a person in the family recognized as the family head or representative). If no one from the parents and descendants is available, the ward member can request the registration upon the recommendation of the chairperson or vice-chairperson of the concerned Village Development Committee or Ward Executive Office if the ward is not part of the municipality.

After the completion of the birth registration form, the ward secretary enters the information into the birth register book and the parents' fingerprints are likewise put on the page of the register book. The ward secretary then issues a birth registration certificate, which is given to the applicant. A copy of the birth registration certificate is saved in the ward archive together with the original birth registration form. The chairman or the ward secretary signs and stamps the birth certificate.

Nepal has only recently introduced a digital system for registration and issuance of birth certificates. Until the digitized system becomes operational in the whole country, there is no standardized national format for birth registration certificates.

Death registration is initiated when the head of the family, or in his or her absence any adult member of the family, informs the ward about the event of death. A death notice form is filled out; the ward secretary enters the information into the death register book and issues a death certificate. If no one from the parents and descendants is available, the ward member can request the registration upon the recommendation of the chairperson or vice-chairperson of the concerned Village Development Committee or Ward Executive Office if the ward is not part of the municipality.

In Nepal, **marriage registration** is mandatory. According to the new constitution, the minimum age for entering into a legally valid marriage, without the presence of a parent or a legal guardian, is 20 years for both parties. Under the old constitution, it was 18 years old. With parental consent or the presence of a legal guardian, both males and females can consummate marriage at 18 years of age according to the new constitution, whereas according to the old constitution, it was 16 years. The majority of marriage registration in Nepal takes place at the ward level. When a marriage is registered in a ward, it is legally required to be the husband's ward, and it is mandatory that both husband and wife are present. The persons entering marriage complete a marriage registration form. The marriage is then manually registered in a marriage registration book by the ward secretary.

A single marriage certificate is issued to the couple by the ward secretary, who also stamps and signs the certificate. A copy of the marriage certificate is kept in the ward's archive together with the original registration form. To complete the registration, the husband and wife must present their citizenship certificates, together with two of their pictures for the documentation. A copy of both the husband's and wife's citizenship certificates are kept in the ward archive together with the marriage registration form and a copy of the marriage registration certificate. Their ages are verified according to the citizenship certificate or national ID card.

The marriage certificate and the ward registration book contain pictures of both husband and wife. Pictures are also stored in the registration book with collected fingerprints of both husband and wife.

All divorces are required to be filed at a District Court prior to the **registration of divorce** at the ward as a divorce is given legal effect based on a court decision. Nonetheless, it is the ward secretary who registers the divorce and issues the divorce certificate.

Based on a form completed by the person filing for divorce, the relevant District Court issues a court decision. Before a court decision is issued, the District Court is obligated to mediate for reconciliation between the couple to try to get them to withdraw the divorce petition. A copy of the court decision is submitted at the person's ward, and the ward secretary registers the divorce in the relevant register book and issues the divorce certificate. A copy of the court decision and a copy of the divorce certificate are kept in the ward archive.

Backlog of unregistered births

No information available

Sample registration forms

Samples of birth registration forms and birth registration certificates can be found in this publication:

- Danish National ID Centre. 2018. Nepal: Birth registration and related civil status documents. nfdc.dk/-/media/BB7CDDEBBC6B46E9AC3372DBA0F3A598.pdf

Samples of marriage certificates and marriage registration books can be found in this publication:

- Danish National ID Centre. 2018. Nepal: Registration of marriage and divorce and issuance of related certificates. nfdc.dk/-/media/DD85D1A0A3214101ABFFB5AE1B975A0B.pdf

Registration fee

Under the *Birth, Death and Other Personal Events (Registration) Act* (1976), birth registration within 35 days is subjected to a fee of 8 Nepalese rupees and registration after 35 days is subjected to a fee of 50 rupees (US\$0.40). The same fee is charged to issue a certified copy of a lost birth registration certificate. In practice, this fee is not charged for birth registration within the 35 days.

Vital statistics system

Vital statistics

Vital statistics are processed by the Social Statistics Division of Nepal's Central Bureau of Statistics. This division also processes statistics on indicators such as population size, health, education, labour force, refugees, crimes, and natural disasters.

As of late 2018, Nepal does not produce disaggregated vital statistics reports from civil registration data. The Central Bureau of Statistics is using data from the population census and other surveys, such as the demographic health survey, for producing vital statistics on a regular basis.

Causes of death

Cause-of-death statistics are not regularly processed by the Central Bureau of Statistics. Civil registration records are also not used as a source for producing statistics on cause of death in Nepal. As in the case of vital statistics information, the cause of death data is collected through periodic surveys. The most recent cause-of-death data for Nepal comes from the Global Burden of Disease study coordinated by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington, which produces comprehensive and comparable annual estimates of disease burden by country, age, and sex for more than 350 causes of diseases and injuries and 84 risk factors. A report²² was developed in 2017 as a result of a collaborative effort of the Nepal Health Research Council, the Ministry of Health and Population, the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, and the Monitoring Evaluation and Operational Research project of the United Kingdom Department for International Development (now known as the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office) Nepal Health Sector Programme 3.

That report estimates the total number of deaths in 2017 in Nepal to be 182,751. Non-communicable diseases were the leading causes of death — two-thirds (66 percent) of deaths were due to non-communicable diseases, with an additional 9 percent due to injuries. The remaining 25 percent were due to communicable, maternal, neonatal, and nutritional diseases. Ischemic heart disease has a rate of 100.5 deaths per 100,000 population, followed by chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (60.2), diarrheal diseases (36.1), lower respiratory infections (31.1), intracerebral haemorrhage (23.4), ischemic stroke (19.5), asthma (15.6), drug-susceptible tuberculosis (14.0), Alzheimer's disease (14.0), and neonatal encephalopathy (12.7).

Digitization

Computerization

Nepal is in the process of setting up a centralized and digitized database of registered vital events. DoNIDCR manages the Vital Event Registration and Social Protection Management Information System (VERSP-MIS), which stores all vital events information registered digitally. Because the front end of this system is designed as a web application, registration officials in the field can access this platform with designated credentials from any Internet-connected computer. Online event registration is in operation in more than a dozen municipalities and seven districts (Kathmandu, Lalitpur, Ilam, Jhapa, Palpa, Kailali, and Tanahu). So far, VERSP-MIS has generated a unique identifier for 1.8 million persons whose identity has been registered upon registration of a vital event entered into the central database.²³

Records of vital events registered manually are kept only in the paper archives in the wards. In case of in-country relocation, the person must submit a migration certificate issued by the ward where they

previously lived to the new ward. The migration certificate does not contain information of civil status, and the person migrating is responsible for informing the new residence ward of his or her civil status.

Computer use is outlined in Table 1.

Table 1: Computer use in CRVS.

Computers used in	Yes	No	Remarks
Districts	X		Limited number
Municipalities	X		Limited number
Health facilities		X	

Online registration services at health facilities

Registration services are not provided in health facilities. If a child is born at a hospital, a birth report (notification) from the hospital has to be submitted for the birth registration to be processed.

Mobile technology application

Mobile technologies are not used for civil registration processes.

Unique identification number

A unique identification number branded in Nepal as the National ID Number is assigned to each newborn during birth registration as long as registration is done using the VERSP-MIS web platform. Otherwise, the number is assigned when the person applies for a national ID card at age 16 at the earliest. This is a 13-digit number where the first 12 digits are randomly generated and the last digit (13th digit) is a check digit generated by a mathematical algorithm applied on the first 12 digits.

Population register

The decision to integrate civil registration and identity management under the authority of a single department of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA) allowed the integration of the national ID card and VERSP-MIS. The integration is underway, using the unique identification number as the personal information that connects records in the two databases. Where personal data is available in digital format, it allows the DoNIDCR to use personal data required to issue a national ID card directly from VERSP-MIS. Similarly, as a person applies for registration of birth or other vital events, their personal data can be verified directly online in the national ID database, as long as they have already acquired an electronic national ID card.

Digitization of historical civil registration records

Precise information on the volume of registration records digitized so far is not publicly available. Some estimates suggest that there are around 100 million archived vital event paper records that are yet to be digitized.

Link with identification system

Since 2018, the identification system in Nepal has been undergoing major transformations; this started with the issuance of the electronic national ID card, which stores identity information and personal biometric data. The introduction of the chip-enabled biometric national ID card is the most visible aspect of changes in the management of legal identity data. All identity information collected in the enrolment process is stored digitally, including personal biometric data that enables biometric authentication of identity. The National ID Number is used to link personal records in the national ID database and the VERSP-MIS database.

Until the national ID card is rolled out fully, the main document that is used as proof of identity is the citizenship certificate, the legal paper denoting citizenship. This document serves not only as the foundation for ensuring key social, economic, and political rights for citizens, but also as the basis for social inclusion and a common national identity. Without citizenship certificates, individuals are barred from registering marriages or births, getting on voter lists, buying or selling land, sitting for professional exams, opening bank accounts, and accessing credit.

In Nepal, a citizenship certificate is issued only to persons who have reached the age of 16. The application must include one of the following:

- Nepali citizenship certificate of one's father, mother, or the close relative in his or her lineage;
- Birth certificate;
- Certificate attesting one's lineage;
- Recommendation of the Village Development Committee or municipality concerned;
- Land ownership certificate in one's name, father's name, or mother's name; or
- Receipt of the house tax.

A citizenship certificate is provided by the MoHA through its District Administration Office established in all 75 districts. A citizenship certificate is required when applying for the national ID card.

Interface with other sectors and operations

While CRVS and identity management are in the process of being integrated at the central level, which includes the central database of vital events and national ID card data records, the DoNIDCR has yet to start establishing data interoperability and ICT interconnection with other government systems. In the meantime, coordination among agencies in data sharing faces many challenges.

Issues like standardization, access, and users' rights have slowed progress on digitization. The major stakeholders that in the future would benefit from DoNIDCR data, the Election Commission and the Central Bureau of Statistics, each have a separate database.

Until data-sharing legislative, administrative, and technical conditions are in place, the national ID card is the main gateway for accessing other government services. For instance, the national ID card is used as voter ID and as a social security card. The national ID card also grants access to some services provided by the private sector.

Improvement initiatives and external support

Improvement plan and budget

Strategic plan

The government of Nepal takes the lead in setting strategic priorities for developing the national CRVS system. To that end, it relies on the strategic plans developed to cover government priorities over four-year periods. Two most recent such plans mention strategic goals and policies to improve the CRVS system.

The Twelfth Plan (2011–13), without specifically giving any policy guidance, set the target of a vital registration computer program package for 65 district development committees for registration. It also set a target of increasing the birth registration rate from 75 percent to 90 percent and increasing other events registration from 40 percent to 65 percent.

The Thirteenth Plan (2014–17) has stated, under the social development chapter on population strategies, the reasons and trends of internal and external migration. The plan has more specifically laid out operational policy and a vital event

registration strengthening program, including the following:

- A survey of the current state of registration;
- The development of a new integrated management information system;
- Training of civil registration personnel (human resources); and
- Expanding network data connectivity — the most important aspect of the plan — which is currently not available in the rural sector.

Budgetary allocations and requirements

Financial resources needed to support CRVS improvement exceed the government's budget and therefore most of the funds are secured with support from the development partners Asian Development Bank and the World Bank. Table 2

shows projected financial needs for Nepal's vital events registration system and how they were covered in the period 2011 to 2016. The table also highlights the overall financial dependence on external loans and grants.

The newly created municipalities have shown a great deal of interest in managing the vital events registration and funding some part of the cost. In that regard, they represent potential agents to drive the civil registration process. At present, civil registries in Nepal have major financing from the government budget and from international organizations. Local governments (particularly municipalities) only fund logistical costs that are not covered by the central budget. Local bodies that have realized that their vital statistics are crucial for planning and delivery of services have started nominal funding from their own sources.

Table 2: Overview of budgetary allocation for the vital events registration system in Nepal.

Fiscal Year	Allocation (NPR; Nepalese rupees)	Allocation (US\$)	Allocation (NPR)	Allocation (US\$)	Allocation (NPR)	Allocation (US\$)	Allocation (NPR)	Allocation (US\$)
			Government		Development Partner			
					Asian Development Bank		World Bank	
2011–12	93,325,000	783,930	1,575,000	13,073	40,800,000	338,640	50,950,000	422,885
2012–13	101,495,000	852,558	348,000	2,888	100,000,000	830,000	1,147,000	9,520
2013–14	234,654,000	1,584,088	10,719,000	88,968	180,135,000	1,495,121	43,800,000	363,540
2014–15	143,731,000	907,564	12,296,000	102,057	97,049,000	805,507	34,386,000	285,404
2015–16	314,402,000	2,609,537	29,152,000	241,962	285,250,000	2,367,575		
Total	887,607,000	6,737,677	54,090,000	448,948	703,234,000	5,836,843	130,283,000	1,081,349

Source: Budgets of the relevant fiscal years, Ministry of Finance (mof.gov.np)

Activities identified as high priorities

With support from the World Bank, in 2016, Nepal launched the Strengthening Systems for Social Protection and Civil Registration Project, which covers areas that will be addressed as future priorities. These priorities include:

- Establishment of a national population register of individuals and household/family folders to support the expansion of coverage of civil registration and social security allowances;
- Establishment of a civil registration system that will grant all individuals and residents easy access to civil registration, enable regular monitoring of registrations, generate timely vital statistics from a central database, and establish linkages with programs such as social security allowances;
- Data collection to establish a population register;
- Communications and outreach campaigns; and
- Institutional strengthening.

Support from development partners

Nepal's vital events registration program has been getting support from the United Nations and other bilateral agencies. During the earlier development phase, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) was a major player to support birth registration and its promotional activities. The World Health Organization (WHO) has been one of the partners supporting database preparation for the management information system focused on death registration and causes of death, and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) supported various population activities. The World Bank and the Asian Development Bank have been initiating and supporting the design and establishment of the VERSP-MIS. In 2016, the World Bank launched the Strengthening Systems for Social Protection and Civil Registration Project to improve the coverage of social security allowances and civil registration, and the delivery of social security allowances.

Conclusion

The CRVS system in Nepal is not yet sufficiently developed, which appears in the relatively low registration rate for the different vital events. Challenges persist on the demand side — there is a widespread perception of little benefit resulting from registration. The same is valid for the supply side, with the registration process still being manual, paper based and, in terms of registration records management, cumbersome for authorities and citizens. The lack of necessary documents, particularly the citizenship certificate of the father, and the lack of assistance from family members in securing required documentation for much of the population are barriers to registration.

To address these and other challenges, Nepali authorities have initiated comprehensive reforms to align its civil registration and identity management with global trends. The result of these reforms is a complete overhaul of the identity management system and the introduction of the chip-enabled national ID card, which is gradually being rolled out to citizens across the country. In parallel, changes have been introduced in the way civil registration services are provided, with paper-based manual registration being replaced by digitized registration and centralized processing and storing of registered data. The institutional merger of civil registration and identity management services under a single ministry underlines the government's intention to treat CRVS and identity management in a holistic manner. Financing remains a significant challenge and the government has to rely largely on support from development financial institutions.



Resources

Websites

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